

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



August 30, 1991

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 1-71-91

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY GAIN COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: SPECIAL SURVEYS TO MEASURE GAIN PARTICIPATION LEVELS

This is to advise you of two special surveys that will be conducted for the month of September 1991. The purpose of the surveys is to determine whether California has met the federally required participation rate in the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program.

Under federal requirements, states must demonstrate that a number equal to a specified percentage of GAIN-mandatory Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients are on average scheduled to participate in GAIN for 20 hours per week, and are in attendance no less than 75 percent of the monthly hours scheduled. Individuals attending less than 20 hours per week can be averaged with those over 20 hours a week, but persons attending less than 75 percent of the scheduled monthly time do not count at all. For federal fiscal year (FFY) 1991, a number equal to seven percent of the mandatory recipients must meet this standard. In FFY 1992, this standard is increased to 11 percent, with an eventual increase to 20 percent by FFY 1995. Failure to meet these standards will result in the loss of enhanced federal funding for GAIN, which for the state fiscal year (SFY) 1991/92 will amount to approximately \$9 million.

The Department of Social Services has repeatedly expressed its concerns with these requirements to the federal government. We are concerned that these provisions seriously disadvantage states that include significant educational components (typically scheduled for 12 hours per week) in their programs, and that the prescribed standards will not provide an appropriate indication of a state's actual level of participation. However, to date, we have been unsuccessful in causing any modification to the federal requirements. Therefore, it will be necessary to do everything possible to meet these standards and retain the enhanced federal funding. (Please note that materials previously transmitted to you on reporting Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training

Program participation, specifically the AFDC-GAIN Statistical Report on Required Participation in GAIN (CA 237 GAIN) and the FSA 108 report, are not related to these special surveys.)

The federal government has informed states that it will be allowable to determine the participation rate for FFY 1991 by conducting one-time special surveys in September 1991. One survey, consisting of a sample of 1300 individuals, is to determine the numerator, i.e., the number of GAIN participants that are participating according to the federal definition. The other survey is to determine the denominator, i.e., the number of GAIN-mandatory AFDC recipients. This survey consists of a sample of 1300 cases.

Given the budget reductions that have already occurred in the GAIN Program, it is imperative that every effort be made to avoid the further reduction that would occur with the loss of enhanced federal funding. Counties must therefore make every possible effort to maximize the participation levels of their GAIN caseload in the future. It is also extremely important that these special surveys be completed as thoroughly and as accurately as possible. County GAIN and AFDC staff will need to work closely together in completing these surveys. Detailed survey instructions will be issued by our Department's Statistical Services Bureau as soon as possible. In the interim, we are providing the following information for use in preparing for the surveys and to provide assistance to you in making every effort to maximize the participation levels of your GAIN caseload in the future.

NUMERATOR

In determining the hours of participation for purposes of the numerator, the following guidelines will apply:

1. Employment hours may be counted in the following situations:
 - o If a person participated in a component and entered unsubsidized employment in September, include both the participation and employment hours provided employment was retained throughout the month.
 - o If a person participated in a component and entered unsubsidized employment in August, and the participation and employment continued in September, include both the participation and employment hours provided employment was retained throughout the month.

- o If a person entered employment prior to August and continued GAIN participation and the employment in September, include the participation hours and no more than an equal number of employment hours. For example, an individual is employed for 15 hours a week and is participating for ten hours a week in Adult Basic Education (ABE). The total number of hours would be 20 (ten hours for ABE and ten hours for employment). For an individual who is participating 20 hours per week in ABE and is employed for 15 hours per week, the total number of hours counted would be 35.
 - o If a person has been employed and begins to participate in GAIN, include the participation hours and no more than an equal number of employment hours as described above.
2. For participants in work study programs, the total number of hours associated with the classroom time and the work training time is to be counted.
 3. The federal rules allow states to count the time when a participant is not in attendance due to recognized holidays (e.g., Labor Day) or formal breaks. In this situation, count the hours that the person would have been scheduled were it not for the holiday or break. Summer recess can only be counted in this manner for individuals who are in high school. However, the break between summer school classes and the beginning of fall classes must be counted in the numerator for all participants who attended summer school based on their scheduled summer school attendance if the fall scheduled attendance is not known yet.
 4. It will be necessary to have documentation of attendance for those cases that are counted as meeting the federal standard. If sufficient information is not already in the casefile for this purpose, the county will need to contact the provider or the participant to verify that the person actually attended the assigned component for at least 75 percent of the scheduled hours. Documentation of this contact should then be placed in the casefile.

The above guidelines should not be viewed as all-inclusive since the Statistical Services Bureau will be providing complete survey instructions subsequent to this letter.

DENOMINATOR

Each AFDC case selected to be in the sample universe must be reviewed and a status determination made for each individual in

the assistance unit. Each individual is to be either GAIN mandatory, exempt or determined to have good cause for not participating in GAIN and, therefore, be non-mandatory. The following identifies which individuals are to be classified as non-mandatory, and therefore, are to be excluded from the denominator calculation:

1. Those who are determined exempt in accordance with the criteria in Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP) Section 42-788-799. If a case selected in the survey includes an individual who has not been referred to GAIN and no exemption determination has been made, the county should make an exemption determination at the time of the survey review. Those individuals determined to be exempt in this process would then be excluded from the denominator count.
2. Those who have been deferred from participation in accordance with criteria in MPP Section 42-761.4 and .5, except that individuals who have been deferred due to employment of 15-20 hours per week or due to being in the first trimester of pregnancy must still be included in the denominator. Also, those who have been determined to have good cause for not participating at anytime during the month in accordance with the criteria in MPP Section 42-782. If a survey case includes an individual for whom a good cause or deferral determination has not been made, the county should do the cause determination at the time of the survey review. Those who are determined to have good cause during this process are to be excluded from the denominator.
3. Those who have been sanctioned. Counties should make every effort to send sanction Notices of Action (NOAs) to appropriate individuals as promptly as possible. Those to whom a sanction NOA has been sent are classified as non-mandatory.
4. Many counties have had to develop cost reduction plans to exclude mandatory participants because of lack of sufficient funding to provide the full range of services. If the county has documentation that an otherwise mandatory participant was not brought into or was removed from the GAIN Program due to the inability of the county to provide needed child care services, the individual can be classified as non-mandatory.

We strongly suggest that county GAIN staff verify the mandatory status of all cases in the survey.

As with the numerator, this is not an all-inclusive list; counties should carefully review the survey instructions that will be issued by the Statistical Services Bureau.

GUIDELINES FOR MAXIMIZING GAIN PARTICIPATION

In order to maximize participation levels in the GAIN Program now and in the future, the following additional guidelines are being provided for use in your county. All of the following guidelines are allowable under current regulations:

1. Counties should encourage the development of 20 hour per week programs. Counties should work with community college and adult education providers to determine if it is possible to expand hours of instruction as needed. To the extent that the participant's primary GAIN activity is not scheduled for 20 hours per week, efforts should be made to increase the number of hours through other activities as appropriate.
2. All hours of laboratory work (e.g., language labs for English-as-a-Second Language students) should be tracked and counted for participation purposes.
3. Work study programs should be encouraged when appropriate.
4. Efforts should be made to determine if persons who are deferred due to part-time employment (15-29 hours per week) are interested in participating in GAIN during the time they are not working. For any hours of component participation by these individuals, a complementary number of hours of work time can be counted as participation. (See instructions on the numerator count listed above.)
5. For program components such as job club which do not require participation during part of a month, counties should work with participants to schedule job search activities subject to the allowable limits on job search, during the gap in time prior to the beginning of the next component.
6. Counties are encouraged to periodically review the GAIN caseload to ensure that necessary conciliation activities are being conducted in a timely manner. In the event that sanctions are required, sanction NOAs should be issued promptly.
7. Concurrent enrollment should be used to the extent it is appropriate and permitted by current regulations.

We cannot over-emphasize the importance of maximizing the participation levels of your GAIN caseload now and in the future. California cannot afford to lose the enhanced federal funding that is available for GAIN. The Department is talking to representatives of the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges and the California Department of Education to ensure their full support. Only by our united efforts can we hope to achieve the federal participation levels and thus ensure the continued success of the GAIN Program in California.

In the coming months, we will be working with the County Welfare Directors Association GAIN Committee to determine what other guidelines may be possible with respect to maximizing program participation levels. Any additional information will be provided to all counties as quickly as possible.

We appreciate your cooperation in this important effort. If you should have any questions or suggestions, please contact your GAIN operations analyst.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. J. Boyle', is written over the typed name.

DENNIS J. BOYLE
Deputy Director